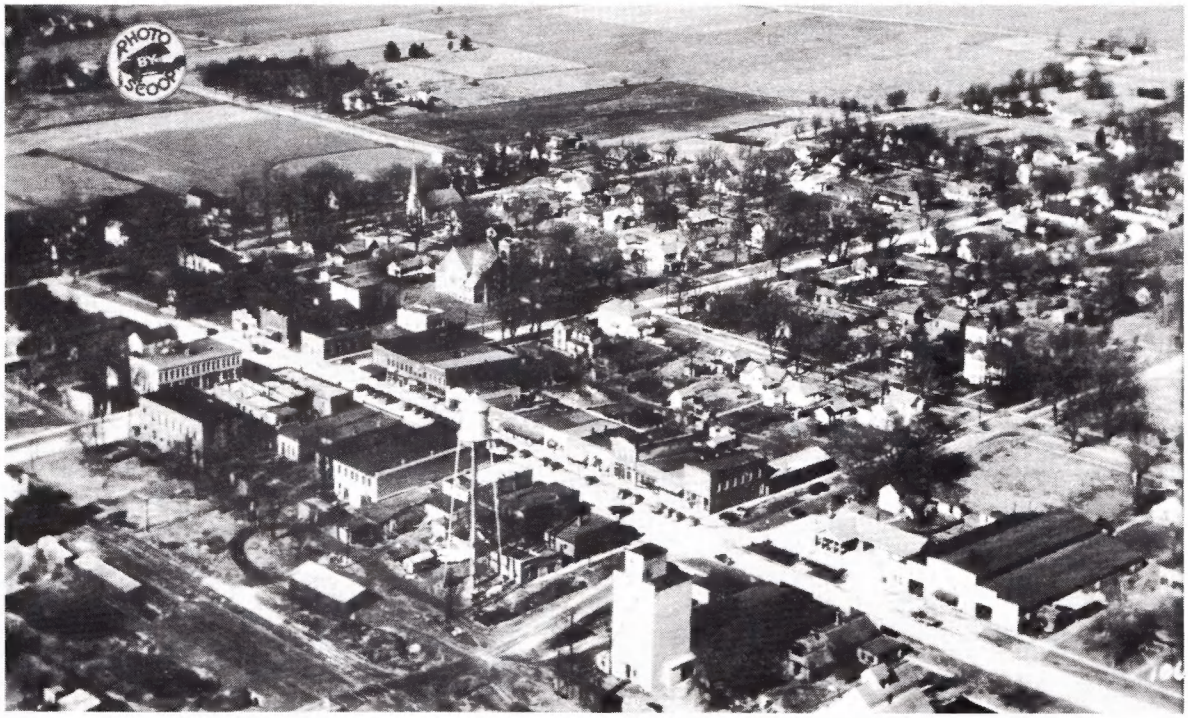
History Of Lawndale, Martin, And Anchor Townships And The Villages Of Colfax And Anchor

McLean County, Illinois



Colfax, 1937 - (courtesy Pantagraph)

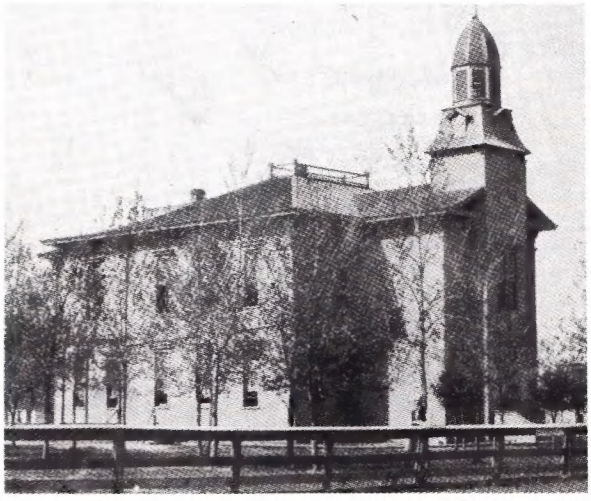
POSTMASTERS AT COLFAX, ILLINOIS
from U.S. General Services Administration

Wm. G. Anderson, Jan. 8, 1880
Samuel A. Osborne, Jan. 21, 1884
David M. Mitchell, Sept. 10, 1885
Wm. F. Garner, Mar. 13, 1886
Cryus H. Benson, Sept. 18, 1889
James Fielding, Oct. 4, 1893, Reappointed Jan. 23, 1896
Harvey L. Henline, Feb. 23, 1898
Zachary Taylor, May 27, 1902, Reappointed Apr. 5, 1906; Reappointed Mar. 17, 1910
Chauncey M. Gilmore, Mar. 24, 1914
Ruth A. Bradford (acting postmaster), June 9, 1916
James Fielding, July 7, 1916
Harry W. Corpe, Mar. 8, 1922; Reappointed May 4, 1926
Hazel C. Van Alstyne, Dec. 18, 1930
Henry W. Lorig, acting postmaster, Jan. 23, 1935; appointed postmaster Aug. 22, 1935, reappointed Jan. 27, 1940
Roy E. Stevens, acting postmaster, July 20, 1954
Martin Wayne Daniels, acting postmaster, May 16, 1955; appointed postmaster July 16, 1956, died Feb. 8, 1975
Lois Grizzle, officer in charge from Feb. 9, 1975, to her appointment on Aug. 2, 1975

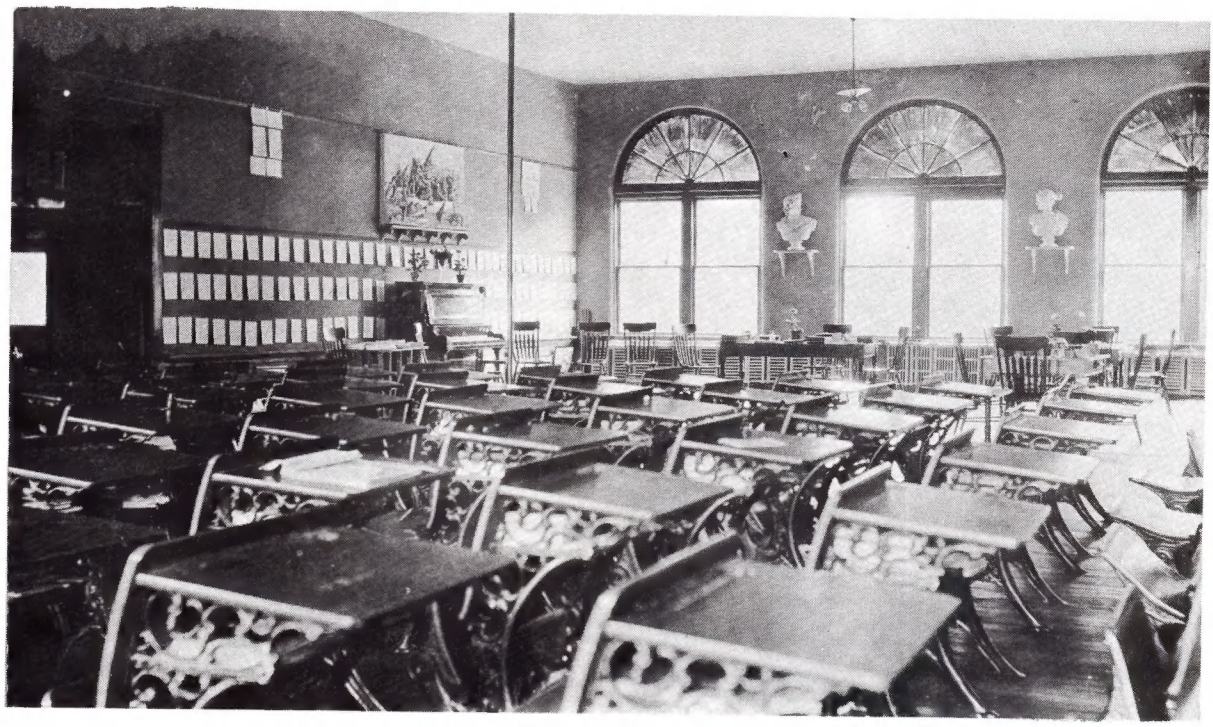
COLFAX SCHOOLS

The first school in the village was the Williams school which was moved from its original site southeast of town into town in 1881, to a lot just west of the present Methodist church. The town grew so fast and a larger school was needed, for an extra room had been rented for a primary room and another teacher employed. A vote was taken in 1883, and a bond issue for $4000 was approved for a new school. A four acre site, at Center and Wood Street, was chosen. A 4 room school was built, then 4 more rooms were added in 1892 and a smaller addition in 1894. There were now 6 classrooms, a library, and a recitation room, with halls and cloak rooms. Stream pipes around the walls provided an even temperature. The usual enrollment was about 240. High school classes were added and the first class graduated in 1891.

Then a fire broke out at 11 a.m. on Oct. 18, 1900, and the



Colfax Grade and High School 1883- 1900



High School Assembly Room built in 1904

building was destroyed. However, most of the books, some desks and equipment were saved. Classes were held in the churches for the rest of the year.

On January 15, 1901 the vote was 74-0 to build a new school. It was ready to occupy in November 1901. It was a 3 story building, with an auditorium on the 3rd floor, and assembly and classrooms for the high school on second floor, grade school on the 1st floor, with rest rooms, additional classrooms and furnace in the basement.

A fire, discovered at 5 a.m. on Jan. 26, 1903, destroyed the new school, and all records, books, and furnishings were lost. The loss was estimated at $30,000 and there was $20,000 insurance. Arson was suspected, but was never proved.

On Jan. 28, classes were resumed in the churches and in rented buildings in town. A new bond issue was approved and a contract let on June 12, 1903, for a 2 story school, much like the old one, except the auditorium on 3rd floor was eliminated. The foundations and some of the old walls were used in the new building. The old Opera House was used as a gymnasium. When it was torn down, a new gymnasium was erected just south of the school building. It burned just after it had been voted to form a new larger school district with Anchor and Cooksville. The old building was used for many more years, but has now been torn down and the site leveled.

Colfax Grade and High School built 1904, razed.

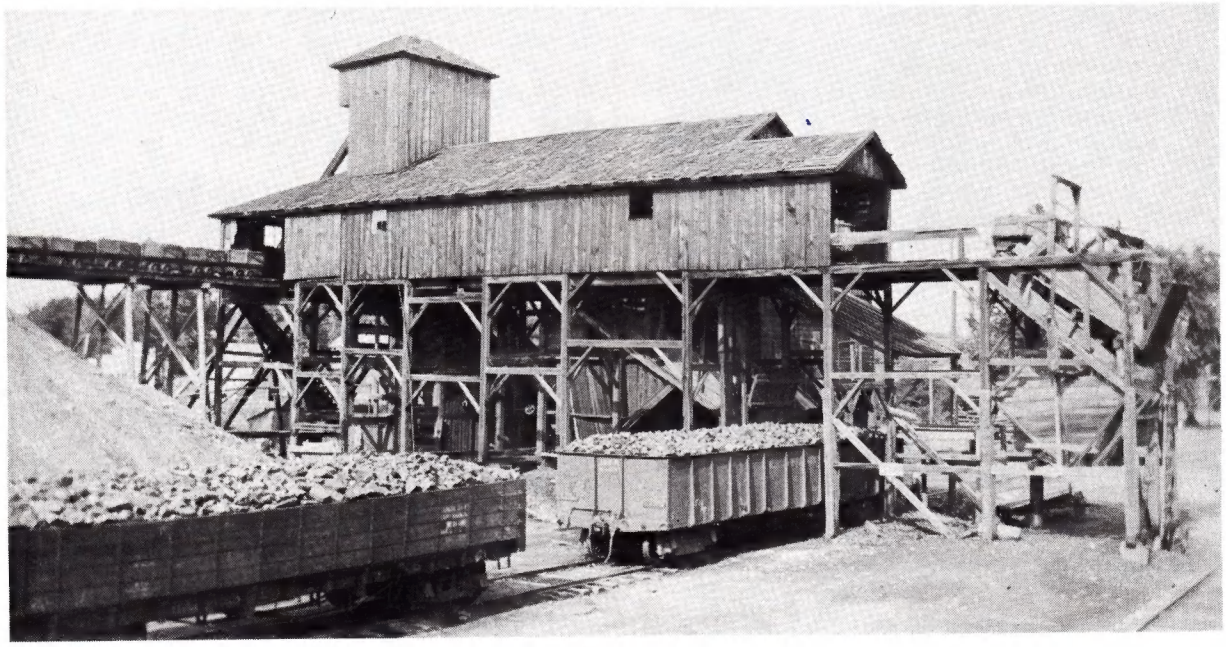
COLFAX CHURCHES

METHODIST EPISCOPAL

In 1868, Rev. George Puett organized a band of 7 members into a Methodist Episcopal Church Society at the Williams school house which stood one-half mile south and a little east of the present village of Colfax. Methodist doctrine had been preached at meetings there for some time. Regular preaching was held there until 1880, and it was part of the Union Circuit.

The Rev. Joseph Flowers was pastor and soon began agitating the question of putting a church building where the new village had just started. A committee was named on April 9, 1880, consisting of T.B. Kilgore, D.T. Douglass, George R. Buck, James Wood, Sr., and J.L. Bradford, to find property to build a church of worship. Then Kilgore, Wood and Rev. Flowers were named on the building committee.

On August 29, 1880, the first Methodist Church of Colfax was dedicated by the Rev. W.H.H. Adams, then president of Illinois Wesleyan University. The church building cost $1,654.37, all paid and was dedicated free of debt. This church was built on the site where the present church now stands.



WEST COAL MINE 1900

COLFAX AND ITS COAL MINES

Gilbert M. Johnson of Colfax did extensive research and wrote a very complete story of the mining projects at Colfax, for his thesis entitled "Colfax, Illinois and Its Coal Mines", as one of the requirements for his degree in Master of Science in Education at Illinois state Normal University in 1954. Because of local interest in his work, he compiled a booklet and copies were sold. With the permission of Mr. Johnosn, a history teacher at Octavia High School since 1949, this information was taken from his booklet. For those interested in a more complete story, we refer you to his booklet.

"The village of Colfax, which had grown to a population of 1153 in 1900, just 20 years after the founding of the town, proved the realization of Mr. Anderson and other leaders, when they felt that there must be some kind of industry to provide the people with work or the village would not grow. The coming of the miners led to work for builders to provide homes, for additional trade and for other businesses to be started. The village grew rapidly as a business center and also as a trade center for many miles surrounding the town.

In 1881, an attempt was made to dig a mine, but the venture ended when the shaft reached 90 feet. Then in 1884, another group tried to start a mining project and that also failed.

The Colfax Coal and Mining Company was organized in 1886 by W.G. Anderson, Dr. D.T. Douglass, D.T. Mitchell, Henry Ellington and others. Frank Seymour and Son began work to sink the shaft on Feb. 6, 1886. The company had a capital of $10,000 and received their charter in October 1886. Many difficulties were encountered: water, quick sand, and hard limestone rock. The first coal was reached on Jan. 26, 1887 at 140 feet, but the vein was only 6 inches thick. Then after 23 months of work, on Jan. 20, 1888, a vein of coal 5½ feet thick was reached at 392 feet. Now there were additional problems: experienced workmen were needed; additional capital was necessary and many small stock-holders wanted to sell-out; tunnels had to be made in the mine, leaving pillars of coal for support, between the rooms from which the coal was taken. These rooms were generally 30 to 40 feet square in the Colfax mine.

The first coal was mined by Edward Keefe in June 1888. Mr. Keefe had been one of the first miners to come to Colfax and he continued to work all the time the mine was in operation. Again more capital was needed for money was running out; the debt grew and the owners drew against their personal credit. Then internal problems developed between 2 factions led by Mr. Anderson and Dr. Douglass. Disputes continued even while negotiations were in progress to sell the company. A.T. Thompson became the owner in 1891 but operated the mine only a short time. Dr. and Mrs. D.T. Douglass and C.G. Ritchie owned most of the stock by 1892 and mining continued until 1902, with Mrs. Douglass as the supervisor of operations, during which time the mine made money. The men of the mine took great pride that theirs was the only mine in the state managed by a woman.

During these years there had been frequent labor toubles. In 1888, there was no union, but an organizer arrived in Colfax in 1890. The miners did not choose to join his group but voted to join the A.F. of L. The first strike was in November 1890, and in the settlement the miners received a 7½ cents per ton increase in pay. There was trouble again in May 1891, and then in May 1894, the miners were out 6 weeks during a national strike, which led to dissension in the village. Price of coal had decreased and wages had been reduced throughout the United States. The miners had been receiving 40 cents per ton and settled for 47½ cents. The big coal strike of 1896, didn't affect Colfax. In August 1897, the management attempted to decrease the pay and the mineers went out on strike. Coal was in demand during threshing season and the pay was increased to 50 cents per ton. As demand slackened,

the company attempted to cut back to 40 cents, and an agreement was made for 45 cents. But at the state convention 40 cents was agreed on, and the local at Colfax settled for 42 cents. The strike had lasted 6 weeks.

In 1899, there were better conditions in the country, and the men secured an increase. Barge companies were buying coal to ship the grain trade. The boom continued for several years. Eighteen or more cars of coal were shipped daily from Colfax, 200 miners were employed, and the Colfax union had 140 members. Then the mines gradually declined in prosperity.

In 1902, the local company was sold to Henry Holversheid and Company of Chicago. Improvements were made on the mine, contracts made with other areas, more miners employed and more houses built. Fifty miners were employed in 1901, and that was increased to 104. The mine operated at capacity and about 60,000 tons of coal were mined throughout 1903 and 1904. Then on Mar. 29, 1904, orders came to close the mine. No explanation was given and it seemed the mine would not be re-opened, so a local group, mostly miners, organized a co-operative company. They bought the mine for $10,000, $2000 cash and the rest to be paid in coal. The directors were Frank Clark, John Schudel, Allie Wood. Edward Keefe was elected president; Frank Clark vice-president; Bert Stanger, secretary and treasurer; with Frank Sawyer in charge of the coal office. Operation began immediately. Improvements were made and work continued about nine years. Then production declined, original stock-holders sold out, and the miners were transient and didn't stay long in Colfax. By 1913, J.L. Barnes owned 350 of the 400 shares. New officers were elected: A.M. Hester, president; F.O. Clark, secretary; Mr. Barnes, treasurer and manager, with James Irwin of Pontiac, pit boss. They operated under the co-operative name, even though it was privately owned. Mr. Barnes bought land in Minnesota in Feb. 1914, and traded the mine as partial payment for the land. The mine was operated by men unfamiliar with mining operations until August 1914, when they wished to dispose of the mine, and it was ordered closed. However, some coal was produced for the next year, and in Oct. 1915, J.J. Goodrick of Pekin secured control and operated it until July 1916, when it again was ordered close. It was re-opened and operated on a limited basis until the summer of 1918. Thirty men were left without employment.

As the years passed, structures on top of ground were torn down, and the shaft was eventually sealed. The shale pile was left at the west side of town.

EAST MINE

With the Douglasses in control of the west mine, certain leaders of the village began to talk about opening a new mine. Frank Seymour, who had sunk the west mine, had returned to Colfax and a citizen's committee of Mr. Anderson, G.W. Arnold and Benjamin F. Payne was appointed to get necessary papers for an investment of $10,000 to sink a new shaft. An agreement was worked out on Jan. 4, 1892, for a new site of 3 acres, ½ mile east of town on property of James Wood. It was difficult to secure capital, and it took almost 2 years, with half of the amount subscribed by Anderson, Arnold, and the Wood brothers: R.P.,; J.E.; J.A.; and E.E.; sons of James Wood, Sr., the original founder of the south part of the village.

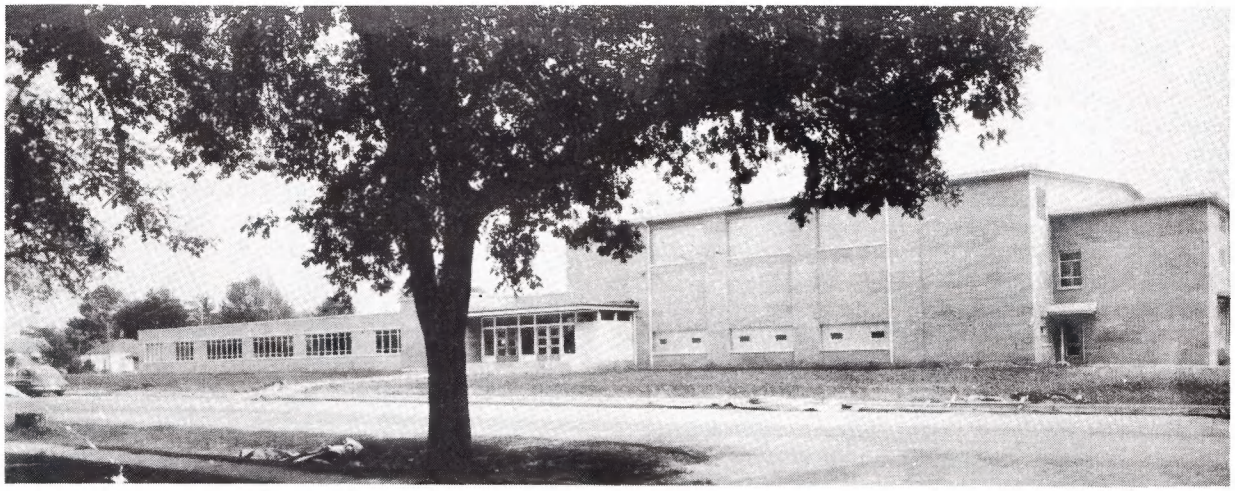
Sinking of the shaft began in January 1894, and at 70 feet a bed of quicksand and water was struck, and the timbers

RAILROAD TRESTLE NEAR
WEST COAL MINE, COLFAX

began to twist. In an agreement with James Wood, a new site was selected a few rods to the east and work was started over. At 40 feet, quicksand was found, then at 86 feet a vein of water with a flow of 6000 gallons per hour. The owners had to raise money for a pump and engine and in June 1894, pumping began. A water lodge had to be constructed above rock, to form a reservoir for the water, so it could be pumped out. In October, a depth of 200 feet was reached, and in March 1895, a vein of coal 5½ feet thick was struck at 402 feet. There was soapstone above the fire clay below the vein. Mr. Seymour was unable to find backers to finance the tower and other work necessary to mine the coal, so simkin and Beverige of Streator started this work. They also ran out of funds and discontinued work. The mine was idle for 2 years, when a group from Bloomington secured the notes and began to develop the mine. Cautious work had to be done to pump out the water, secure the loosened timbers, and prevent the shaft from collapsing. In January 1899, work to reopen the mine was well under way, cages installed, two hoisting engines in place, boilers and steam power connected, and pit cars were being built. T.S. Willhite was general supervisor; Jack Willhite was directing the work, J.P. Swarthout, pit boss, Jack Seymour was in charge of engines and the Illinois Central had built a side track to the mine. The future looked bright. Homes were being constructed by T.S. Willhite, for now 125 homes for 200 miners would be needed. Many homes were built and sold to the miners.

Then disagreements arose, the property became involved in litigation, and Ewing and Pits of Bloomington took over and resumed operation for a short time. There were several trades in rapid succession, and a Chicago company purchased the mine in 1901. The mine was rebuilt, and in operation on December 10, 1901, but a fire on Dec. 15, in the engine room, destroyed much of that building, damaged the hoisting cages, and other machinery. Business troubles followed. The men who were working to keep the water out of the mine, 30,000 to 40,000 gallons were day, were not paid and they quit. The shaft was closed for a year, and on May 24, 1902,, the business was sold for $465. Colfax parties had lost $15,000 in the venture. For 20 years the mine was idle, the tower collapsed and was dismantled, but the shaft was not filled in.

In 1921, Mr. Olander representing a group from Pekin, came to Colfax. He received a long term lease from G.W. Arnold, obtained some equipment from the west mine, and organized the citizens Coal Company on March 16, 1921. Additional capital was needed and again the people of Colfax helped, and by April 1922, coal was again in sight. Barney Olander was president of the new company; Walter Olander, vice-president; B.J. Ghigieri, treasurer; and Charles E.



OCTAVIA HIGH SCHOOL COLFAX 1953

earmarked the excess building funds for the next 3 years for the construction of a new grade building at Cooksville. On July 19, 1961, contracts were let for $169,689.50 for the new building. After its completion in 1962 the old frame building at Cooksville was torn down.

Mr. Abell retired at the end of the 1962 school year, after 30 years of leadership in the Anchor and Octavia schools. He moved from the area and is now a resident of Florida. The Cooksville Gymnasium in the Cooksville business district was sold in July 1962.

In June 1966, a company was employed to plan for future building needs of the district.

Charles W. Clark resigned in March 1967, after serving as superintendent since the formation of the Octavia district. He still resides in Colfax.

Plans for a new addition to the high school building for all grades and supporting services continued, and on Apr. 11, 1970, a special election approved a bond issue for $795,000 for the construction of that addition. It was planned by Phillips, Swager and Associates. Bonds were sold at a net interest of 6.19 percent, and the general contract was issued to the Del Construction Company of Washington, Ill. It was completed in 1973 after numerous delays. The old school at Colfax was dismantled in the summer of 1973, at a cost of $8415. During it's last years it was occupied by all the students in 5-8 and was called the middle school. All children in grades 1-4 attended school in Anchor or Cooksville.

The Board approved Golden Age passes for citizens of Octavia District, 60 years or older on November 13, 1972, permitting them to attend athletic events free of charge.

Everett Wingett was employed in 1954, to establish and instruct in the Industrial Arts program. With the exception of one year, he has continued until the present time. In 1974, in co-operation with the board, a Building Trades class was initiated. The first project was a house in northwestern Colfax, which was completed in the winter of 1975-76 and was sold in February 1976 to Mr. and Mrs. Everett Klintworth of Anchor Township.

The Anchor school building was torn down in 1975 at a cost of $8475.

After several previous failures, a special referendum to increase the educational tax from $1.60 to $2.50 per $100 tax valuation was approved by a majority of the voters on June 9, 1975.

Many teachers employed at the beginning of Octavia district have remained until their retirement. Gilbert Johnson, instructor in Social Studies, and Estella Hansley, who was teacher in the grade school, and is now librarian, have been with the school system since Octavia was started and are still on the faculty. Outstanding programs have been conducted in Band and Vocal Music, Agriculture and the Athletic areas. We cannot list here all the names of the many oustanding teachers who have served in the Octavia school system.

In this bicentennial year, 1976, Octavia may look with pride on the past quarter of a century of maintaining and improving the program of education and service to the pupils, citizens, and communities within its boundaries.

HISTORY OF OCTAVIA MANOR NURSING HOME

Dr. Norman S. Beebe, a family physician, had practiced in Colfax, for many years with the exception of active combat service overseas in World War II. After returning to his practice from service, Dr. Beebe often expressed his wish for and the need of a nursing home facility at Colfax.

In the spring of 1968 Dr. Beebe, Chamber of Commerce members, and other interested parties met at the office of Donald L. Wilber, attorney. It was decided by the group to attempt to obtain a nursing home at Colfax that would serve the needs of the town and surrounding community.

The first need was for a substantial sum to be pledged as capital stock with which to form a corporation. In this meeting some stock pledges were made. A short time later a public meeting was held at the Legion Hall in Colfax to explain the possibility of a nursing home and to solicit sufficient stock pledges to make the project possible.

This meeting, attended by some 60 or more interested citizens, resulting in the pledging by 24 individuals of stock capital in the amount of $40,000.00

The first meeting of Stockholders of Octavia Manor, Inc. (the name chosen for the proposed home) was held June 27, 1968 to adopt by-laws and elect a Board of 7 Directors. Directors elected were-Norman S. Beebe M.D., A.L. deMola M.D., Ernest J. Warsaw, Francis Harpole, Everett Z.

REV. ANDREW A. HAHN

BY CLARENCE WILLKE

Andrew Hahn, the well remembered former pastor of St. John's Lutheran church, southeast of Anchor where he served for 46 years, was born in Weissach, Wurtenberg, Germany, and was baptized and confirmed in the Lutheran church at his birthplace. After attending a preparatory school in Grossengersheim, Germany, he came to Mendota, Illinois, in 1884, where he studied theology under Dr's Sigmund and Gottfried Fritchel at Wartburg Seminary in Mendota and was ordained to the Gospel Ministry at Mendota in 1887. The day after his ordination he left Mendota for an extended Mission field at Leola, South Dakota, and in the same year organized the St. James Lutheran congregation there. For some time he served twelve preaching stations and organized several congregations in counties near Leola. In the year 1888, he married Ida P. Grey at her home in Mendota, Illinois. Dr. F. Richter performed the ceremony, after which the young couple returned to Leola, where a new church and parsonage had been built. However, the following year this church and parsonage were destroyed by a prairie fire and Rev. and Mrs. Hahn narrowly escaped with their lives. Human lives plus many farm houses, livestock and most of Leola were destroyed in this disastrous fire.

In October 1890, Rev. Hahn was called to serve the young St. John's Lutheran church at Anchor, St. John's Lutheran church of Sibley and the preaching station in Lawndale Township. He served the three congregations until 1896, living in a farm house somewhere between Sibley and Anchor. Considering the distances involved between parishes, mud roads which at times were impassable except on horseback, this alone was an accomplishment. Under these conditions it was impossible to conduct services at each church on every Sunday. In 1891, a small parsonage had been built by the Anchor Congregation and in 1897, Rev. Hahn began to serve the St. John's congregation exclusively, his salary at this time having been set at $400.00 per year. In 1898, under Rev. Hahn's leadership, a new 500 lb. gun metal bell was acquired and installed in the tower of the old church and this same bell was later transferred to the present church and still tolls when services are opened, 79 years later.

Plans to build the present church were made in 1908 and again Rev. Hahn was charged solely with the responsibility of obtaining pledges for the construction of the new building, which he accomplished during the same year. Actual construction began the year following, and the new church was dedicated in November 1909, at a total cost of $11,803.00. It was not only a beautiful church but also substantially built with its brick walls and slate roof that has not needed replacing even after these 67 years. The beauty of the interior with its solid oak altar and pulpit plus the fine arts windows, stands today as a lasting memorial to Rev. Hahn. In 1920, the present pipe organ was purchased which is still giving outstanding service. Several years after Rev. Hahn's death, Amphion Cathedral Chimes were added to the organ and dedicated to his memory.

Rev. Hahn preached his last sermon on October 5, 1936 and passed away on the following Sunday, on his 71st birthday. From the "Gibson Courier" of that time we read: "Rev. Hahn was an ideal pastor, a shepherd of his flock, a very unassuming Christian gentleman, kind, tolerant,

Rev. Andrew Hahn
Pastor St. John's Lutheran Church 1890-1936

endowed with broad sympathy and understanding. He made friends in every circle and won the esteem of people not connected with the church."

During the 46 years of his ministry at Anchor he baptized 1082 souls, confirmed 652 persons, performed 223 marriages and officiated at 335 funeral services in his congregation. Mrs. Hahn was born at Mendota, Illinois in 1868, and passed away in 1950. They had three of their deceased children buried at the head of the Church Cemetery at Anchor.

Rev. and Mrs. Hahn were the parents of nine children, five of whom are deceased: Esther Hahn, 1889-1897, Hulda Hahn 1891-1966; Andrew Hahn 1892-1964; a late pastor at Cuero, Texas; Ida Hahn 1897-1897; Paul Hahn 1894-1961. Surviving are the following: Mrs. Pauline Kegerreis, Ames, Iowa; Mrs. Alice Rausch, Kankakee, Illinois; Mrs. Leola Ferdinand, Denver Colorado; and Mrs. Marie Hansen, Normal, Illinois.

THE WILLIAM STACKPOLE STORY

The large white, two and a half story house, with its four square columns in front of it, south of Anchor, is so different from the usual home built on the prairie, that the questions frequently asked about it are: Who built it? How old is it? Are the stories told about it true? Some of these questions we can answer and some still remain legends, awaiting proof or disproof.

William Stackpole, the first man to commence farming operations in Anchor Township bought many acres here and built the house. The 1878 History of Livingston County gives us early information about his life before he came to this

WILLIAM STACKPOLE HOUSE, erected 1855. Picture taken October 1975. Woman on right, Mrs. Esther Combes Hanson of Fairbury as a child, ran errands for Mrs. Stackpole when Mrs. Stackpole was an elderly neighbor in Fairbury.

area. He was born in Thomaston, Maine, on Dec. 27, 1827, and in early childhood came with his parents to Tazewell county in the fall of 1832, where he lived until 1849.

In the spring of 1849, he started for the gold fields of California, leaving his brother's home in Pike Co., Ill., on April 4th, and the party reached the western slope of the Sierra Nevadas on the 8th of September. In March 1851, he returned to Pekin, Ill., where he built a warehouse and engaged in the produce business, and in the fall of 1852 opened a coal mine, and also improved a fruit farm of about 3000 trees. This place became known as Orchard Mines, near Pekin. In 1853, he purchased a large tract in Anchor Township. He moved to Fairbury in 1861. He had married Jennie S. Harlow in 1856, who was born in Watertown, N.Y. They were the parents of four children, Willie G., Mary, and Isabelle, who died young, and only Anna survived."

The 1879 History of McLean County has a long, interesting account of Mr. Stackpole's life in Anchor Township. "The first man to commence any farming operations in the area was William T. Stackpole, Esq. of Fairbury, then residing in Pekin, Tazewell County, carrying on a large grain and produce business on the Illinois River, then the only line of transportation known to this part of the state. In May 1855, Mr. Stackpole came across the country from Pekin, with three teams, to commence spring work on the large tract of land, which he had purchased in 1853 and 1854, aggregating 2320 acres, located in Sections 17, 18, 20, 29, 28, and 27. Coming by way of Bloomington, where he had loaded with lumber, he put up with Ephraim Myers at Cheney's Grove. The next morning he made a temporary survey, then put up temporary buildings and commenced breaking the prairie.

"Up to that time, no person had broken prairie with horses. It was supposed it could not be done, and when he told them he was going to do the work with horses, which it was believed could only be done with three or four yoke of oxen, he was laughed at, and people began to talk of "Stackpole's Folly". The "red root" which was the great impediment to breaking prairie, whose top was hardly discernable in the grass, but whose firm large root running deep into the ground, was as firm as a rock against the common plow, could only be overcome by the steady, stolid pull of well trained cattle. Mr. Stackpole had discovered that the root, to be killed, need not be cut off by the plow but that a hit by the plow was sufficient to destroy its vitality and cause it to die; hence he knew he could plow with horses, and he did. Men came from from Cheney's Grove to see him fail in his plowing. They came, saw, but he conquered.

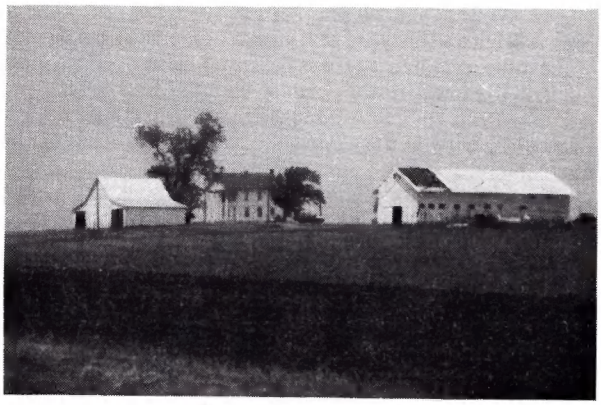
"He purchased a boat-load of lumber in Chicago, which he brought on one of his own boats to Joliet, thence by railroad to Lexington, and drew it across the country to his farm. The first summer, he built the large farmhouse, which at that time was the largest, finest farm house in McLean County.

"He built a long barn on the farm. The rattle snakes, greenheads and mosquitos were the most troublesome enemies that the new farmer had. The stable was kept dark to protect the horses from the attacks of the mosquitos, but it did not protect them from the rattlesnakes. When one of these descendants of the first tempter got into the manger, it would neither eat or let the horse eat, until it was removed. Deer, at this time, were still numerous and herds of five to fifty were often seen. The skeleton of a buffalo (American bison) was found by Mr. Stackpole on his farm, and his neighbors at Cheneys Grove also found some. For two or three years, prairie wolves were very troublesome. All these minor objections shrunk into insignificance, however, compared with the terrible fires. No real loss of human life occured here, but losses of property were common. In one fall, Mr. Stackpole lost several hundred tons of hay. The high grass, often at that time, growing to a height of eight feet, gave a fine opportunity for the spread of a devouring fire. He also brought out the first reaper ever used in these parts.

"The following year (1856) he put up a board fence around a half section. Like all of his buildings, this was done in first rate style. The posts were sawed and then charred in fire. The fence stood well for sixteen years. He stocked his farm with several hundred cattle and a thousand sheep. In 1859, he had eleven hundred acres of grain, largely wheat, which that year proved a bad failure. But business reverses followed his labors at Pekin, and in ten years from the time he made his first purchase at Anchor, all his property had been sacrificed to meet the demands against him. The low water on the Illinois River in 1856, gave him his first severe loss. The revulsion of 1857, when wheat fell in Chicago from $1.18 to 60 cents in 20 days, and nearly every bank in the country closed it doors, following quick upon the suspension of the "Ohio Life and Trust Company" left him poorer by thousands of dollars. The peculiarity of this case was that during this decline in Chicago, wheat remained firm in Liverpool. The failue of the banks placed it beyond the power of commerce to move the wheat forward. The system then in vogue, placed it out of the power of men to send forward crops without the aid of banks.

"The disasters of the first year of the war (1861) finished what the former uncontrollable events had started, and the year 1863, saw Mr. Stackpole's land closed out under mortgages at ruinous prices, and himself left penniless. Dr. Sabin, purchased the portion of the Stackpole property upon which the dwelling stood, and was living there and was practicing medicine in this part of the country in 1879".

"During his years at Fairbury, he studied and worked out a plan to open the waterways of the country, and to prevent the bars that accumulate at the mouth of the rivers."



Stackpole Homestead about 1974. Barn shows damage by winds at time on tornado that passed north of this homestead, April 3, 1974.

Mrs. Alma Lewis James of Fairbury, has a chapter about William Stackpole and his family and the tragedies that kept befalling them, all their lives, in her book about Fairbury. The family is buried at Graceland Cemetery in Fairbury in unmarked graves. Mrs. Stackpole and her daughter, Anna, spent their last days as penniless hermits in their home near Marsh Park in Fairbury.

Abraham Brokaw obtained the farm, when Dr. Sabin left the community. Since then, there have been many tenants on the farm, which is still in the possession of some of his relatives. Ferdinand Mueller, a brother of Mrs. George Ulmer lived on the Brokaw farm for 27 years, leaving there about 1913. Some of the later families who have lived there were John Cross, Donald Stubblefield, Alva Storment and the present tenant, Donald Mizell.

The following description of the house was written by Dona Stubblefield Little, who once lived in the Stackpole house.

"The house with its four square columns was originally three full stories high, topped by a cupola. There were three pairs of French doors on the front leading onto a second story screened in porch, and two pairs on the first story, opening onto the lower screened in porch, which covered the full front of the house. There is also a large front door framed by narrow windows leading onto the lower porch. Some time in the past the roof was lowered and the cupola removed, making the house a 2½ story house.

"One story states that the cupola was used to watch for cattle drivers, and another that it was used to watch for the stagecoach coming over the Saybrook moraine from the south and from Cropsey ridge on the north, on its route from Bloomington to Chicago. It was said that at night, a lantern was placed in the cupola of the house, or Inn, as it was sometimes called, so travelers could find their way.

"The home had many interesting features, with its ten foot high ceilings; two large pantries on each side of the large kitchen; a beautiful winding staircase leading up to an open hall with bannisters supporting a walnut handrail; an elegant tile fireplace; an upstairs window that was shuttered outside, but had no window on the inside; an upstairs room with a small opening just large enough for a person to get through, which opened out into a room over the kitchen, but unfinished except for hanging shelves on each side; and a basement with a hard dirt floor, with a small clear stream running through. The third floor consists of two rooms with but a single window.

"Legends abound about this house. Under the house was a brick lined hole, which has been filled in. Was this really a cave for an underground railroad entrance, or a well to supply rain water for kitchen use? The house was reported to be haunted because a corpse that had been transported on the stagecoach stopped at the Inn, or was it because of the shuttered upstairs window, placed there to keep the symmetrical balance in the design of the front of the house with its shuttered windows and French doors? Was the "secret room" over the kitchen, with its shelves, used to hide slaves during the day so they could escape to freedom through the underground railroad at night, or were prisoners held there when being transported, or was it really used as a dry storage room for extra food for the kitchen?

"The long barn, with its small windows on the outer walls, so that the horses faced the outer walls, was razed in 1975. It was said to have had a cupola, that was removed long ago, with the center of the barn being used for grain storage and perphaps part used for carriages and other equipment. Did this barn ever serve as a place for horse thieves to conceal their horses? Did it house the change of horses for the stage coach line or was it just for the large farming operations conducted there?

This homestead consisted of a well-planned beautiful farm home, large enough to accomodate cooks, servants and farm hands, in addition to the family, and other buildings including the spacious barn, to operate 2320 acres of land, several hundred head of cattle, 1,000 sheep, and was the net result of a man's dream come true, then all was lost, because of circumstances beyond his control."

FOUNDERS OF ANCHOR TOWNSHIP
1ST SUPERVISOR
GEORGE R. BUCK

George R. Buck, soldier, farmer, teacher, politician, minister, was supervisor of Cropsey Township in 1876, when the movement to divide the township into two parts was started. The move was successful, and he named the new township "Anchor." We believe a story of his life will confirm the idea that he chose the name because of its religious significance.

George R. Buck was born at Havana, Ill., on October 9, 1840. He enlisted in Co. K., 17th Ill. Vol. Inf. under General Wheeler on May 25, 1861, just after the Civil War had started. By May 1862, he was made a sergeant for his bravery and in October became a 2nd lietenant. He was discharged June 10, 1864, and on Oct. 23, 1864, married Rebecca Conover of Lexington.

The couple settled in southwestern Cropsey Township on the line with Cheney's Grove. In 1869, he started a Sunday school at the Jones school house. He had been converted at a meeting in Havana when he was 18, and in 1873, experienced sanctification at the Saybrook Methodist Church and was licensed to preach. He organized the Bethel Methodist Church in 1873, at the Sherwood schoolhouse near his home. A frame building was soon erected on the Abraham Crotinger land (the corner of the present Earl Baker farm.) He continued to hold local preaching relations while looking after his farm.

The 1873 McLean County Atlas shows that he owned 480 acres (320 acres now the Nardin farm, and 160 acres where